

John Davidson's

TIME MANAGEMENT that doesn't SUCK



“Get More Done!”

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Introduction

Why Time Management Is So Important

Benjamin Franklin once said: "Do not squander time, for *time is the stuff life is made of.*"

"Time is the stuff life is made of"

All any of us has on this planet is time. Younger people have more of it, older people have less of it. No one can ever be sure exactly how much time they have -- but for sure, it's limited, and for sure, every second it's ticking away.

Yes, time really is the stuff life is made of.

And because time is the stuff life is made of, our relationship with time governs *everything*.

Our relationship with time:

- controls how much we can get done
- what we'll achieve
- whether we'll be able to stick to our goals or not
- ultimately, whether we'll be successful

Time can be a friend, accompanying us on our path to success as we continually invest it within ourselves. Or it can be an enemy, dogging us at every step and making us feel eternally behind.

Two Different Relationships with Time

Time Controlling You	You Controlling Time
Always busy	Lots of free time
Results take forever	Results come quickly and easily
People wonder what you're being paid for	You're considered the "go-to guy/girl". Quickly promoted.
No time for your family	Lots of time available for your family

Bad parent whose children won't really remember you	Good parent, whose children will treasure their time with you
Can never seem to stick to goals	Finish the goals you set
Bulging around the waist; you're overweight	Healthy weight and athletic body

Which of these columns sounds more like you?

Time Management is the Single Most Important Skill in Life

But don't worry, because:

- a lot of people are bad at it
- it's easy to get a lot better at it

The problem is that we've been lied to and misled.

We've been tricked into believing in all the wrong tools and all the wrong thinking.

Most people no longer know how to control their time. They make feeble to-do lists, adding more and more items. Or they decide on a long list of their goals, and then give up before they've even begun.

Many of the people I've met are actually **afraid** of their to-do lists.

The Good News ...

Time management is a skill, and like any other skill, it can be learned, practiced, and mastered.

In these pages I'm going to outline a powerful method that will get you immediate results.

Chapter 1: Why You're Behind

You feel behind. You're not entirely sure why. But you know that something needs to change. Don't worry - this book is going to cover everything you need to do to get where you want to be. But first, let's review the four reasons why you might be feeling behind:

1. **The 5 Productivity Killers**
2. **Not understanding the To-Do List**
3. **Not understanding Goals**
4. **Your Conscious/Subconscious Connection**

The 5 Productivity Killers

Any of the following bad habits is capable of absolutely killing your productivity. Combined, they spell certain death:

1. Wishful Thinking
2. Results-Fixation
3. Negative Thinking
4. 20% Behavior
5. Perfectionism

Wishful Thinking

Wishful Thinking is where we wish our tasks to be done. Although just wishing a task to be done might sound childish, this is actually what we're all guilty of anytime we create a to-do list and throw a bunch of items on it, or make a bunch of blind resolutions about how this year is magically going to be different than the previous year.

It takes more than just wishing a task will be done to actually get it done.

If it's been 10 days and you haven't done the report you're supposed to have done, throwing it on a to-do list is just wishful thinking. Similarly, if you're trying to lose weight, just deciding all of a sudden that now it's going to happen is also wishful thinking.

Without an actual strategy, all of our goals and to-do lists are ultimately just wishful thinking.

Results-Fixation

Results-Fixated Thinking (RFT) is where we focus only on the results, and not on the process that will get us there. It's closely-related to wishful thinking, and is just as big of a problem.

Let's be honest for a moment. The result *is* our main reason for doing anything.

If you have a project you're working on at work, then in the end what's really important is that you finish the project. In fact, it probably doesn't even matter very much how you finish the project - you're just supposed to get it done.

And of course, all of this is quite reasonable. In the long term, the point of productivity is indeed to get things completed.

But in the short term, focusing on results is depressing and frustrating. The bigger the project that you're working on, the more frustrating it will be for you to think only about the result of your work -- because the bigger the project, the further away the final result is.

QUESTION:

Which of the following situations sounds easiest to achieve?

CHOICES:

- A) You have a project you're 2 weeks behind on. You want to be caught-up by tomorrow.
- B) You weigh 250 pounds. You want to slim down to be 180 pounds for your friend's wedding in 3 months.
- C) You want to get promoted at work

To me, none of the choices above sound particularly easy. They all sound like they'll take quite a lot of work -- and no plan is presented for accomplishing them. This is the tyranny of results-fixated thinking:

*Results-fixated thinking makes it **hard** to achieve things*

In order to accomplish really major things, we need to **ignore** the final result.

Even though the final result is the reason we're doing all of our work, we need to not look at the result, because usually it is so discouraging it will just overwhelm us.

As they say, "A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step". Thinking about the 1000 miles is the best way to never get started. But thinking about the "one step, then another" will eventually get you there. Not just that, but a lot faster than you think.

QUESTION:

How long do you think it really would take to walk 1000 miles?

CHOICES:

- A) 3 years
- B) 1 year
- C) 6 months
- D) 3 months
- E) 1 month
- F) 3 weeks

(Answer on last page of this book)

We'll return to results-fixated thinking a bit later.

Negative-Thinking

Let's be clear about something for a moment. Positive and negative thinking are very misunderstood, especially recently.

Many popular self-help resources have tried to present positive thinking as something of a free lunch. The book The Secret is in my opinion especially guilty of propagating this fallacy. So let's be clear.

Positive thinking **by itself** will not get you anywhere. Just imagining yourself on a tropical beach with a million dollars, or imagining all your tasks completed, is of course just a case of **wishful thinking** and won't change anything. No matter what books like The Secret might try to make you believe.

But negative thinking **by itself** will **LIMIT** you.

Negative thinking can convince you that things are impossible before you've ever started working on them.

And just as with results-fixated thinking, negative thinking makes it a lot harder to achieve anything major.

So let's settle for a compromise, okay? I'm not going to ask you to magically become blissfully positive. There are a lot of pessimists out there, and it isn't my mission to change your way of viewing the world. But I do need you to **stop thinking limiting thoughts**.

I want to **STOP** hearing the word **CAN'T** and start hearing the word **CAN**.

With the right process, and enough time, you **CAN** do anything. Repeat it until you believe it.

20% Behavior

20% Behavior is worrying about the least important 20% of what you're doing. Its name comes from the 80/20 Principle, which we'll explain later.

20% Behavior includes:

- **fussing over meaningless details**
- spending lots of time on small things

20% Behavior is an absolute sinkhole for time, and a **huge** productivity killer.

We'll touch on this later, but for now just remember: you want to be accomplishing big things. You want to be getting promoted, living a healthier life, making more money, buying a new house, etc.

The way to accomplish **big things** is to work on **big things**.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is the extremest form of 20% behavior possible, so it merits a special name. Perfectionism is especially common, and especially damaging.

It's important to realize that perfection in this world simply does not exist.

Even if you did finally get something to the point that it seemed perfect to you, eventually another person will come along who has a different opinion.

Speaking practically:

- You can **ALWAYS** make a document slightly better. There is an entire science devoted to this, called A+B testing, where you endlessly create 2 versions of a document, A, and B, show them both around, and see which one people like more. ("Oh, 50.0001% of people prefer document B!") Then you repeat. Endlessly.
- You can **ALWAYS** improve a design a little bit. A+B testing all over again.
- You can **ALWAYS** make a product a bit better. A+B testing all over again.
- You can **ALWAYS** do a bit more, make the client a bit happier, please your boss that much more, put in a few extra hours.

The issue isn't that perfection is bad. The issue is that while you are chasing perfection, the work you are doing becomes more and more insignificant.

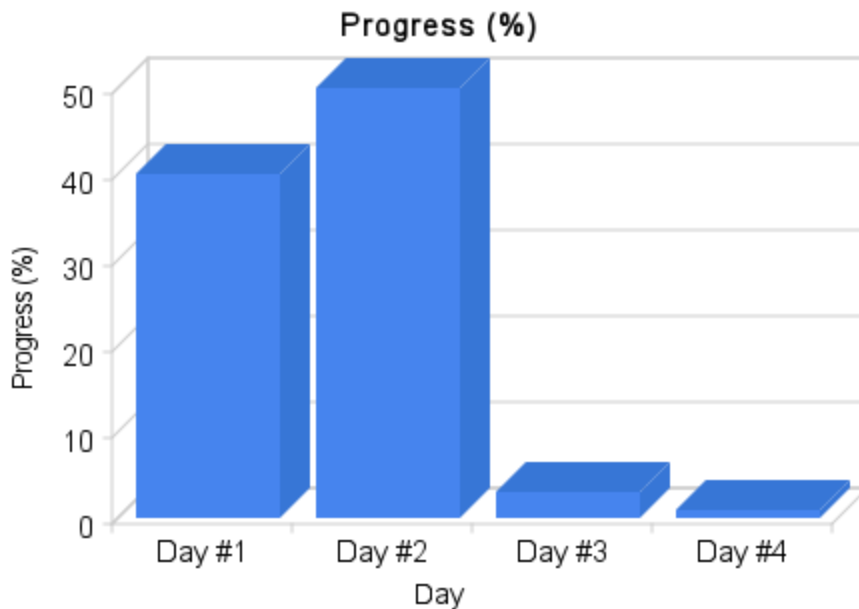
So perfectionism turns into a way to justify 20% behavior, which we already know is a huge time-waster.

For example, let's say you're writing a report. On Day 1 you write 5 entire pages. Great. Then on day 2 you write the final 4 pages. Great. Now it's time to go back and edit the report. You change a few sentences, re-read it, modify a few more sentences, and lose your entire day in edits. You're still not satisfied, so you spend one more day showing your report to your closest co-workers, getting their feedback, making minor edits, changing a few sentences, etc. Finally, at the end of day 4 you feel like your report is ready.

Let's look at a quick table of what just happened:

Day #	# of Hours Worked	# Pages Produced	% Perfect
1	8	5	40%
2	8	4	90%
3	8	0	93%
4	8	0	94%

Days #3 and #4 were fantastically unproductive, and day #4 was the worst of all:



Perfectionism means having lots and lots of days that look like Day #3 and Day #4 from the graph above.

To-Do Lists: What They Are and Aren't

What To-do Lists Are

So, some time ago psychologists performed some research. And what they found was interesting: most of us can only hold between 5 and 9 pieces of information in our mind at any given time. In essence, we only have 5 to 9 "slots" we can use, no matter what we're trying to think about.

And in fact, no matter what you're doing, you're probably using at least 3 of these slots.

So that leaves anywhere between 2 and 6 other slots that you can use for remembering short-term tasks.

So if you have more tasks than that, you'll need to write them down. That's fine, and that's what to-do lists are for.

To-do lists exist to help you with your memory. Nothing more.

What To-do Lists Aren't

- **To-do Lists can't make you do things.** To-do lists are just a way to not forget.
- **To-do lists are not motivating.** It's not fun seeing a big list of tasks. It's not fun feeling out of control. It's not fun having your list tell you what to do. And it's not fun seeing the list getting longer every day.
- **To-do lists are not for complex tasks.** To-do lists are for simple actions you're worried about forgetting.
- **To-do lists are not a place for your goals.** Because to-do lists don't have any built-in motivation, you can't achieve goals just by putting them down. Writing "Exercise 30 minutes" on a to-do list **does not** make you more likely to do it. But it will make you more likely to feel **frustrated** with your to-do list.
- **To-do lists are not for new things.** A to-do list helps you to remember things that you are already, normally doing. If you put down something radically new on a to-do list, such as "Go salsa dancing" (when you've never done it before), the to-do list will not help you to do it. You'll either do it or not, depending on your **conscious/subconscious connection**.

For all the above reasons, I'm going to stop using the phrase "To-Do Lists" throughout the rest of these chapters and I'm going to start just calling them "Lists".

Goals: What They Are And Aren't

Goals: What They Are

Goals are *directions for the future*. Goals define *what you want*.

Goals: What They Aren't

The problem with goals is that without a *process*, goals are just wishful-thinking.

We already know wishful thinking is a time management sin that won't get us anywhere.

So what does a goal with a process look like?

Here's an example, broken down:

<i>The Situation</i>	"A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step"
<i>The Goal</i>	Walk 1000 miles
<i>The Process</i>	Take one step, then another

As you can see,

- The Goal is what you ultimately want
- The Process is how you get there

So many books out there will try to tell you that in order to succeed with your goals, you just need to be more careful about how you set your goals. Goals should be measurable, specific, of an intermediate time frame, yadda yadda yadda.

Here are some goals which are just that, specific and measurable, and aren't too far off in the future:

- Get promoted to manager this year
- Get a \$5,000 pay raise in the next year
- Lose 20 pounds in the next year

But a closer analysis will reveal that all the goals above are actually just wishful-thinking run amok -- and thus are highly unlikely to ever be achieved.

Have you ever had a goal or two like one of the goals above?

Every goal needs a process in order to be achievable.

A process is something that gives us regular, daily feedback about whether we're taking the right steps or not.

The Conscious / Subconscious Connection

Your mind can be divided into two parts:

1. The Conscious Mind	<p>Your conscious mind is the voice inside your head when you talk to yourself</p> <p>Words commonly associated with the conscious mind: should, must, decided, have to, if, unless</p>
2. The Subconscious Mind	<p>Your subconscious is where your feelings and thoughts originate from</p> <p>Words commonly associated with the subconscious mind: feel, sense, I was thinking, stress, anxiety, unsure</p>

Your **Conscious / Subconscious connection** is the connection that exists between your Conscious mind and your Subconscious mind.

The most powerful state of human existence is where our conscious and subconscious minds are in alignment. *When this happens, we are capable of amazing things.*

However, sometimes for various reasons our conscious and subconscious minds become out of alignment.

In other words, we don't really want what we say we want. We throw an item on our to-do list, but we don't actually want to do it. Or we think of a goal that we're supposed to want, but we're not sure we actually do want it.

Usually there are two feelings that are associated with conscious/subconscious connection issues: Self-sabotage and Anxiety.

Self-Sabotage

Why would we ever sabotage ourselves? Or phrased differently, why wouldn't we always want the best for ourselves?

The answer is that we **do** always want the best for ourselves. And that's why our subconscious will sometimes sabotage what we think we want.

For example:

- **How many times have you ever arrived late for something you really wanted to do?** Now think about how many times you've ever arrived late for things you didn't want to do.
- **Have you ever forgotten something that you didn't want to do?**
- **Have you ever used the phrase "I don't care"?**
- **Have you ever done only a mediocre job, when you knew you were capable of a lot more?**

There are two messages here:

1. **You must believe in what you're doing.** Whether the reason is to make money, to support your family, to have a nicer car, to look better, or just because you can -- *you must find an exciting reason for doing what you're doing.*
2. **There isn't any productivity system that can overcome self-sabotage.** If you really don't like what you're doing, it may be painful, but it's better to be honest and move onto something new. You will be happier.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of general stress and unrest. It's a very painful emotion caused by an internal conflict within our mind. If part of you wants one thing and another part of you wants another, that's anxiety, and it's not pleasant.

Anxiety ***always*** indicates a conscious/subconscious connection issue and is the ***single best warning*** that we may be sabotaging ourselves.

Chapters 2 through 6 go into the full details of our time management methodology, and I guarantee you'll get a lot out of them.

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